

Judges 16:1-21 • The Incompatibility of a Sin-Based Relationship

Introduction

When we observe fellow Christians living intimately with sin in an area of their life, what is our reaction? The phrase “Hate the sin, love the sinner” is true on some level, but how will that person ever be rescued from that stronghold of sin? Perhaps we’re intimidated to address another’s weakness while we’re experiencing our own. But at the very least we have to realize that we can never live long on the enemy’s turf, can never resist forever. Sooner or later we will be faced with the horrific results of embracing and clinging to a sin-based relationship.

¹Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her.

[Read v.1]

Q: Samson has taken the vow of a Nazirite (see v.17), which is someone that is supposed to be personally dedicated to God. What do we find in this opening sentence that is incompatible with devotion to God?

A: Sexual immorality. Throughout both Testaments of the Bible “faithfulness” and “unfaithfulness” to God are symbolized and taught as the difference between a pure bride and a prostitute (or “harlot”).

Q: What is the 2nd thing wrong with Samson according to this verse?

A: He’s in Gaza, the home of his enemy. Taken together, Samson believes he is strong enough to go into the midst of the enemy’s lair and still remain stronger than them. As with the rest of Samson’s life, he believes he can operate completely on his own without the support of those on his side as well as make his own rules.

[Read v.2-3]

²When it was told to the Gazites, saying, “Samson has come here,” they surrounded the place and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city. And they kept silent all night, saying, “Let us wait until the morning light, then we will kill him.”

³Now Samson lay until midnight, and at midnight he arose and took hold of the doors of the city gate and the two posts and pulled them up along with the bars; then he put them on his shoulders and carried them up to the top of the mountain which is opposite Hebron.

Q: Would you characterize this as a “spiritual” victory? Why or why not?

A: This appears to be a “personal” victory having no real spiritual parallels. Samson has provided a personal show of strength. For most other judges, prophets, and men of God throughout the Bible such actions are generally accompanied by an explanation of what they accomplished on behalf of God’s will – the absence here of such is striking.

Q: If this wasn’t a “message” from God, what is the lesson Samson has learned that he may be continuing to apply to his personal life’s choices?

A: He is incorrectly assuming he can “do it himself”, is powerful enough to overcome his own sin (there was no immediate punishment for his actions), and is a law unto himself.

⁴After this it came about that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. ⁵The lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, “Entice him, and see where his great strength lies and how we may overpower him that we may bind him to afflict him. Then we will each give you eleven hundred pieces of silver.”

[Read v.4-5]

Q: Is Delilah Samson’s one, true love? Is this his “soul mate”, the woman he dreamed of meeting and marrying some day?

A: No, this is yet another sex-based relationship as evidenced by their interaction throughout this passage.

Q: What does this relationship have in common with that of the harlot in v.1-3?

A: It’s both sin-based and takes place in the heart of his enemy’s territory. He’s not just physically surrounded but **spiritually** surrounded.

Q: Would you characterize Delilah as being “on Samson’s side”?

A: No. It’s obvious that she has been bought and is his enemy.

Q: Compare v.1-3 with v.4. Who has learned a significant lesson and changed their behavior?

A: Samson’s enemies. They have learned that they cannot directly defeat Samson in a physical confrontation so they effect a plan to find Samson’s weakness.

Q: Why will the plan probably work?

A: Because Samson is so deluded in his personal power to resist his enemies that he doesn’t believe it’s necessary to leave. They have the time they need to work on him over and over again until they succeed.

Application: Contrast Samson’s choices with 1 Corinthians 10:13-14:

*“No temptation has overtaken you such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of **ESCAPE** also, so that you will be able to endure it. Therefore, my beloved, **FLEE** from idolatry.”*

What pressures from the enemy are you enduring entirely on your own strength? From what – or whom – do you need to “escape” or “flee”?

⁶So Delilah said to Samson, “Please tell me where your great strength is and how you may be bound to afflict you.”

⁷Samson said to her, “If they bind me with seven fresh cords that have not been dried, then I will become weak and be like any other man.”

⁸Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh cords that had not been dried, and she bound him with them. ⁹Now she had men lying in wait in an inner room. And she said to him, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” But he snapped the cords as a string of tow snaps when it touches fire. So his strength was not discovered.

[Read v.6-9]

Q: Based on what we know about Samson’s character and behavior so far, why do you suppose Delilah does not bother being subtle? Why does she plainly confront him with what she wants?

A: She has perceived that Samson’s primary weakness is “pride”. He believes himself to be not just physically stronger than everyone else but above all the rules. She is attacking him at the very point of the greatest weakness of his character and spiritual walk, if you will.

Q: What is revealed in v.7 – and repeated throughout this passage – by Samson himself that betrays his problem with pride, his reliance on self?

A: “...I will become weak and be like **ANY OTHER MAN.**”

Q: What might the symbolism be for us regarding Delilah having men “lying in wait”?

A: The enemy is always prepared on his own turf to attack as soon as weakness on our part is perceived.

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¹⁰Then Delilah said to Samson, “Behold, you have deceived me and told me lies; now please tell me how you may be bound.”

¹¹He said to her, “If they bind me tightly with new ropes which have not been used, then I will become weak and be like any other man.”

¹²So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them and said to him, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” For the men were lying in wait in the inner room. But he snapped the ropes from his arms like a thread.

¹³Then Delilah said to Samson, “Up to now you have deceived me and told me lies; tell me how you may be bound.”

And he said to her, “If you weave the seven locks of my hair with the web [and fasten it with a pin, then I will become weak and be like any other man.”

¹⁴So while he slept, Delilah took the seven locks of his hair and wove them into the web]. And she fastened it with the pin and said to him, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” But he awoke from his sleep and pulled out the pin of the loom and the web.

¹⁵Then she said to him, “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when your heart is not with me? You have deceived me these three times and have not told me where your great strength is.”

¹⁶It came about when she pressed him daily with her words and urged him, that his soul was annoyed to death. ¹⁷So he told her all that was in his heart and said to her, “A razor has never come on my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb. If I am shaved, then my strength will leave me and I will become weak and be like any other man.”

^{18a}When Delilah saw that he had told her all that was in his heart, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines, saying, “Come up once more, for he has told me all that is in his heart.”

[Read v.10-14]

Q: Is Sampson completely blind – or stupid – to Delilah’s intentions? Why doesn’t he just up and leave?

A: Sampson continues to overcome his enemies on his own. He believes he can continue to get what he wants from this sin-based relationship and still overcome on his own.

Q: What is Delilah’s charge against Samson?

A: “...you have deceived me and told me lies...” (v.10 & 13)

Point: One of the enemy’s tools of spiritual warfare is to use our own standards against us. It doesn’t matter that the enemy is engaged in the same shameful sins so they will manipulate our conscience to deceive us into believing that not being “honest” about our sin will alleviate our guilt for that sin, when the only thing that can help is to **STOP SINNING**.

Q: Why does Samson keep “teasing” them with different ways to physically tie him up as the solution to overcoming him?

A: The real issue is a **SPIRITUAL** issue, not a physical one. Samson is clever enough to recognize he’s in enemy territory but believes he can outwit them.

[Read v.15]

Q: How has Delilah changed her attack?

A: Previously she accused Sampson of deception and lies; now she accuses him of personal unfaithfulness to her.

Q: For the first 3 attacks Delilah has set herself up as a 3^d party between Samson and his enemies. What is she doing now?

A: She’s making it personal. Samson will have to make a choice if he wants their relationship to continue.

[Read 16-18a]

Q: In the end, how was Samson defeated?

A: Never leaving the enemy’s compound, Samson was worn down to the point of no resistance. It was not accomplished by lies, challenges, or even love, but by his pride in believing he could always resist the enemy on his ground.

Q: What is different between his answer to Delilah’s question this time compared to all the other responses, other than he finally told the truth?

A: He revealed that this was a spiritual issue and, worst, how to overcome it.

Q: What is the difference in Delilah’s reaction this time?

A: She sees that she has finally penetrated to Samson’s heart. As with all spiritual warfare, the heart is the goal.

^{18b}Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hands. ¹⁹She made him sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his hair. Then she began to afflict him, and his strength left him. ²⁰She said, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!”

And he awoke from his sleep and said, “I will go out as at other times and shake myself free.” But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him.

²¹Then the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes; and they brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze chains, and he was a grinder in the prison.

[Read v.18b-20]

Q: What is different about the Philistines actions this time as opposed to the 3 previous attempts and why?

A: This time, before they experienced success, they brought Delilah's pay-off with them. They understood the significance in Delilah's conquering Samson's heart.

Q: Why is it not surprising to us that Samson “suddenly” found himself without the Lord?

A: He never consulted the Lord, never spoke in the Lord's name, never even hinted of a spiritual component to these activities. The Lord was gone from his life in terms of the choices made and behavior engaged in long before the haircut.

[Read v.21]

Q: What is Samson's final spiritual condition?

A: The same as his physical condition – blind and bound, working **for** the enemy instead of against.

For Your Consideration

Q: What does this teach us about personal relationships? Can we win someone to the Light if we're engaged in sin with them? What should we do?

“If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you’ for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.”

-- Mat. 5:29-30

“But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

– Ephesians 4:20-24

Q: Does this apply just to relationships? Are there parts of your life in which you reside completely within the enemy's territory? How long will you be able to resist?